An Inaugural Dissertation on Gastritis.

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admitted March 7th 1821.

The
Temperance Depository
or
Penitentiary.

Gastritis

This disease is divided by Nosologists into two species, viz, Phlegmonous and Erysipelatous. It is to the former of these, that I intend to confine myself.

Gastritis of this nature is most usually caused by acrid substances of various kinds, especially, when the mucus of the stomach has been abraded, or so changed, as not properly to perform its office: among these are arsenic, oxymuriate of mercury, alkalies, the oxalic and mineral acids. It is worthy of notice, that the substances most acrid to the taste are not those which produce most irritation; the strongest spices are often taken into the stomach without the least injury whatever; while, on the other hand, the most insipid substances affect it most dreadfully. It may, also, be caused by food of an improper nature, by potations of spirituous liquors, by large draughts of cold drinks, such as cold water, iced

punch or iced creams, taken when the patient is in a copious perspiration, and at a time, when the body is rapidly parting with its heat. It is, also, occasioned by external violence, from wounds, blows, and by pressure on the ensiform cartilage when a luxation of it takes place, or it is broken so, as to press on the stomach. It may, likewise, be produced by contusion or distention by taking into the stomach hard and indigestable substances.— By poisons or corrosive substances. It is, also, said, that repelled Exanthemata and Gout, may be a cause. Gastritis may arise from acrid matter generated within the body, as very often happens in various ulcerous affections of the fauces and Asophagus; and it may, moreover, proceed from inflammation of some of the viscera, as the Liver, intestines &c, extending to the stomach. Like the other phlegmasia it may be excited by causes of sudden plethora, particularly by the suppression of accustomed hemorrhages or habitual evacuations.

The terminations of this disease like all of this

order, is either by resolution, suppuration, or gangrene, and it is also said by writers in some instances to terminate in schirrus. The tendency of this disease to admit of resolutions, may be perceived by its having arisen from no violent cause, by the moderate appearance of the symptoms and the remissions of these being gradual, arising principally in consequence of remedies employed in the course of the first or at farthest the second week of the disease.

The tendency to suppuration may be ascertained by the symptoms continuing in a moderate way for more than one or two weeks, and also by a considerable abatement of pain, while a feeling of weight and oppression still exists. When the abscess is actually formed, cold shiverings ensue, with marked exacerbations in the evening, which are succeeded by night sweats, diarrhœa, copious flow of urine, watchfulness, and other symptoms of hectic fever, and these at length prove fatal, unless, the pus is thrown up by vomiting, and then the ulcer heals.

The tendency to gangrene in this complaint, as in other internal inflammations, may be suspected by the unusual violence of its symptoms, and their not yielding to proper remedies in the commencement of the diseases.— When gangrene actually takes place, it may be known by the sudden cessation of the pain, the pulse continuing its frequency but becoming weaker with cold clammy and partial sweats, deliriums, and with other marks of increasing debility ensuing.

The termination of Gastritis in schirrus is thought by writers to be of rare occurrence; but, when it is the case, it is characterized by these symptoms, nausia, vomiting soon after taking food: likewise very obstinate costiveness is usually present. When ulceration takes place, hectic generally ensues, which eventually takes the patient off. When this is present there is a constant eructations of very fetied air, and a frequent vomiting of dark coloured mucus, which is extreemely offensive.

The paine which attends is pretty constant, and is more or less severe according to circumstances; it is augmented by receiving an acrid or acid substance into the stomach, but, on the contrary, when milde articles are taken in, such as milk, gruel &c they occasion little or no inconvenience.

Symptoms of Gastritis.

The symptoms of Gastritis like those of most other phlegmasiæ are not very complicated. The paine of the stomach is very often violent, and accompanied with a sense of burning heat, — sorenes to the touch. The paine is not always confined exactly to the epigastric regions, but extends as far down as the false ribs and often shoots to the backe. It is, also, accompanied with much prostration of strength, attended with pyrexia. The pulse at the commencement is small, but frequent, quick, hard, and chorded, and sometimes intermitting. In more advanced stages tension about the epigastric and umbilical regions succeeds, accompanied with flatulency and severe

vomiting; especially when any thing is swallowed, it is immaterial what the substance is, whether solide or fluid, this will take place. There is a most distressing thirst attending, with restlessness, anxiety, continuals tossing of the body, with great debility, watching and delirium. This disease runs one with great ra=pidity, and if not timely arrested an aggravation of its symptoms take place, irritation follows;- there is great loss of strength, with faintings;- a short and interrupted respiration, cold clammy sweats, hiccoughs, coldness of the extremities, and intermitting pulse, and a termination is soon put to the patients existance. I have now, I believe, enumerated all the symptoms that generally accompany this disease; but there not unfrequently occurs a variety of anomalous affections arising from what are called deluzive sympathies. These affections are the results of late observations, for I have never seen them described by any writer whom I have perused on the subject. It is remarked by Dr Chapman in his lectures supported by a

number of respectable practitioners of this city, and by no less than Dr. Physick, that in more than one case he has observed accompaning gastritis a violent pain in the great toe, this remark is certainly of great practical importance; it demonstrates to us somewhat the pathology of gout;- it has also been remarked by them that gastritis has now and then been accompanied with an acute pain in the groin. During the prevalence of the yellow fever in Philadelphia, it was observed by the above mentioned authority, that patients attacked with this disease were troubled with a severe rigidity or paralytic affection in one or both arms; this is no uncommon symptom in gastritis, it is a very frequent attendant;. Moreover, it is remarked by Dr Physick, that during the yellow fever, and gastritis arising from common causes, that the pudenda of females are often affected with much inflammation, pain and itching; he observes that he never saw a case in which these

symptoms appeared that recovered.

Prognosis.

The prognosis of gastritis is seldom favourable if the pains, vomiting and fever are not relieved in the course of four or five days; we may suppose suppuration or gangrene will most certainly take place. But if the symptoms become mild, and proper medicines have been administered at the commencement of the disease, it may, probably, terminates in resolution; but, it is more favourable if the pulse becomes more soft and full about the fourth day, demimishing in frequency, the pain gradually abateing, the urine throwing down a sediment or diarrhoea supervening are to be considered as propitious symptoms.

Diagnosis.

The diagnosis of gastritis is not difficult to a person acquainted with its symptoms.

Preface.

Chapter 1.

It is impossible to confound it with any other disease if this is the case. In cramps and flatulent pains of the stomach, the pulse is commonly natural or nearly so, nor are the latter attended with the sudden prostrations of strength, which accompanies gastritis. In these, there is often no vomiting and it is very uncommon to be so constant or so frequently excited by the ingesta. The augmentation of pain on taking any thing into the stomach is much less observable in flatulent pains and cramps, than in gastritis; in the former, the great increase of pain on pressure, one of the best diagnostics of gastritis is not remarked. The hiccough too, which is a more frequent attendant on the latter complaint, aids here in distinguishing it.
Besides, in spasm of the stomach, the case most frequently taken for gastritis there is such a sense of constriction and suffocation, that the voice is often suspended, while in gastritis, it

is more free and the cries of the patient, are often piercing. It is said by Sauvages and Quarin that, it is almost impossible to distinguish gastritis from an inflammation of the epigastric muscles, in which, it is said, all the symptoms of the former are present, in a less degree. But, by a little attention, however, the cases may easily be distinguished. For the paine as in gastritis, indeed is somewhat increased by pressure, but it is also augmented in a greater degree by motion, that is, by those motions in which the epigastric muscles are concerned or brought into action, which is not the case in gastritis. The state of the pulse in the former case, also, is very materially different. If affected at all, instead of being small and feeble as in gastritis, it is strong as in most other phlegmasiæ; besides, there is little or no tendency to vomiting in this case and some degree of swelling of the muscles may very often be observed; this symptom however is not invariably a concomitant,

and there is frequently some degree of fullness about the stomach in gastritis. Those who die of this disease show on dissection the villous coat of the stomach greatly inflamed; upon its surface is found a coat of coagulable lymph covering the whole of the inflamed part. Also is exhibited a partial thickening of the substance of the organ at the part, which is inflamed; the inflammation rarely extending over the whole of its surface, when ulceration has actually taken place, the ulcers sometimes are found to penetrate through all its coats, and sometimes only through one or two of them.

Treatment.

The treatment of gastritis is very obvious; the first indication to be fulfilled in this disease is to arrest the rapid strides of inflammation in an organ, which is so vastly important to the human machine; it, therefore, demands our serious attention, for if not timely arrested the patient is soon cut off.

among the most efficient remedies is decidedly venesection, there is no disease in which it ought to be carried to a greater extent, and in fact is, than in gastritis. cases are on record in which venesection has been employed and repeated four or five times a day for several days in succession. This remedy must be employed to a vast extent in this complaint, totally regardless of the state of the pulse or apparent prostration of the system. It must be carried as far as the patients constitution will admit. When we are called to a case the lancet should not be used too timorously, but boldly; if the patient is of a plethoric or robust constitution and an adult we should take at least twenty or thirty ounces of blood and if the symptoms are not by this abated at our next visit to be repeated to the same extent, even the Europeans who use the lancet very sparingly have carried it to the extent of two hundred ounces in this disease. The cure of this complaint I believe to depend principally upon this remedy,

therefore, we must persevere in it; if not the disease will get the ascendency of our remedies and the patient will be soon cut off. Called in therefore at an early period of the disease, if the patient be an adult of a strong constitution, it will be requisite to take from twenty to thirty ounces of blood at least from the arm. We shall often find when called to a patient on examination, the pulse to be very weak. This circumstance might deter us from bleeding, but it should not, for it is certainly a depressed one and calls for the loss of blood when this is performed we shall find the pulse almost invariably to rise after the first operation and if it should vary from general experience we must still persevere, and repeat it the second time and again if deemed necessary. As we deplete we will find the system to recover from its apparent prostration and a case of common inflammation will reveal itself, by far more easy to manage than the case immediately preceeding it. The practice of the Europeans to detract but a small quantity

at a time and frequently, is certainly inefficient, especially in this disease. No one who will take into consideration the importances, situation and extensive sympathy which exists between this organ, and the whole frame, but will coincide in the validity and justness of this opinion; but only observe the vast progress of this disease; it rushes on with the rapidity and impetuosity of fire, who would not rather extinguish it by one dash of water as it were, than to stand and behold it consuming the patient by only using those means which are calculated merely to mitigate its rapidity, if it does this, which I rather expect it does not, but aggravates it.

The next which succeeds in importance is blisters: they are generally recommended and ought never to be omitted after the hardness of the pulse is reduced by bloodletting. When applied they should be large enough to cover the whole region of the stomach, for a large blister causes no more paine than a small one, but the effects are manifestly greater;- aiding

in the same purpose, fomentations to the abdomen are fit remedies, bladders filled with hot water, or cloths wrung out of hot water, or spirituous liquors will answer exceedingly well. If they should not make any evident impression on the disease, they at least conduce to the comfort and ease of the patient. The irritable state of the stomach prevents all kinds of medicine from being received into it; from this circumstance we are in a great measure precluded from the employment of internal remedies, but it becomes indispensably necessary, that the bowels should be opened, when we are prevented from this cause, we must resort to emollient injections and they should be composed of the mildest ingredients, as they act principally by mechanical distention, and should be thrown up the rectum in large quantities. It is also necessary in many cases, that we may derive the full advantage from the enema, to repeat it frequently, thus we not only keep the bowels in a soluble state, but also cause the injec-

-tions to operate as a fomentation to the bowels.
As soon as the stomach has recovered to a state in which it is able to retain any thing, we should endea-vour to open the bowels more completely by laxatives or purges; the medicines most proper to effect this purpose are either Caster oil or Calomel. The latter is by far preferable for very obvious reasons, it can be more readily taken and retained on the stomach than any other substance; it is of small bulk, and thereby less liable to create irri-tation, therefore, can be given, when every other purgative would be rejected. As an evacuant some of the neutral salts are highly recommended in this complaint, among these the most highly thought of, is the Epsom salt, it is exceedingly useful in this disease on account of its being more easily retained on the stomach than any other medicine. In Colera Infantum and Colera Morbus; it is certainly very beneficial, in the latter disease I have witnessed its efficacy myself; the stomach is tranquilized completely

by the article, the vomiting effectually checked by it, and the natural action is established downwards. At the commencement of an attack of gastritis it is a very important indication to calm the stomach in some measure if possible, and to effect this the most prompt medicine, is lime water and milk; if this should not prove effectual, we should next resort to anodyne injections. At this juncture the warm bath may be employed with great advantage, this is certainly of great utility, it has a tendency to excite perspiration, calms irritability of the stomach, contributes greatly to the ease and comfort of the patient and gives a centrifuge direction to the diseased action; but, this remedy should not be resorted to until the violence of the inflammation is somewhat subdued by the directly depletory remedies. It is recommended by authors in this disease, also, to drink freely of mucilaginous mixtures to protect the stomach from the action of irritable matter, either received or generated within; but

this practice is not found to have this effect alto=
=gether; but on the contrary, to be very mischievous,
it increases the irritability of the stomach and thereby
keeps up the vomiting. To allay thirst we should direct
a small quantity of fluid to be swallowed as possible.
By deluging the stomach with fluid as has been
recommended by writers will not answer; we do not
allay the thirst but aggravate the disease. By
giving drink in small quantities we shall avoid
the danger of increasing the vomiting, and the thirst
will be better allayed than if the patient were
allowed to drink as much as he pleased.

If the disease still progresses and symptoms of
approaching gangrene appear, we must rely princi=
=pally upon opium; this is one of the most impor=
=tant remedies in the phlegmasiæ and especially
in gastritis,: it undoubtedly possesses the power of
arresting a tendency to gangrene and mortification.
We have proof of its efficacy not only in this disease,
but also in every case of inflammation. This

observation is not of late date, it has long existed and prevails at present among physicians. Especially as regards gastritis and enteritis, it displays its utility most strikingly at that point in which active inflammation is about to terminate in gangrene or feeble inflammation.

But if opium should fail under these circumstances there is one other which we may resort to with great confidence; it is the common Spirit of Turpentine. This medicine was used by Dr Physick with great success in those years in which the yellow fever prevailed in this city, with a view to allay vomiting attending that disease. From analogy and other notions, practitioners were induced to try it in gastritis and with very evident efficacy: It has been used in Enteritis and Puerperal fever with great success, but it has also evinced its power in that stage of inflammation which is about to terminate in gangrene; at this crisis of the disease, it is certainly one of our most valuable

remedies. With this I conclude what I have to say of the treatment of gastritis arising from ordinary causes.